



News Release

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Governor Gregoire provides emergency funds to prepare Washington for what could be a busy flu season

OLYMPIA — Governor Chris Gregoire has authorized emergency funding to prepare the state for flu season, and a potential return of swine flu (H1N1) — also known as pandemic influenza.

The allocation includes \$700,000 to buy additional antiviral medications to go with the supplies the state Department of Health has already gotten from the federal [Strategic National Stockpile](#).

“The response by state and local health as well as health care providers and hospitals all across Washington was excellent when confronted with the new strain of swine flu,” said Gov. Gregoire. “And while the symptoms of the outbreak this spring were similar to those of seasonal flu, we’ve got to do all we can to prepare for what’s ahead. The World Health Organization recently declared a pandemic — the first global flu outbreak in 41 years. It’s wise to prepare for whatever the flu season brings this fall by ordering more antiviral medications now.”

The allocation also provides state health officials with \$150,000 to cover some of the costs of the response when the pandemic flu strain was detected in Washington. The additional funding follows a recently adopted [emergency rule](#) that adds the pandemic flu strain to the state’s list of notifiable conditions.

“There’s no way to be sure what the next flu season will bring, yet we know that this global outbreak isn’t over,” said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. “Our disease investigators and lab staff along with our partners in local health and the provider community did a remarkable job in the initial tracking and monitoring of the outbreak this spring. And we’re still seeing respiratory illnesses from the outbreak strain in our state. We’ve got to look ahead and be ready, and Gov. Gregoire’s support with this emergency funding helps put us on the right track.”

Washington received shipments of antiviral medications and other medical supplies from the federal stockpile in May ([photos of stockpile supplies](#) are online, Newsroom page). The additional supplies bought with the emergency funding will help state and local health officials respond if the flu season hits hard this fall and winter.

The state health department will participate in the national H1N1 Planning Summit next month in Maryland. Discussions will be led by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Homeland Security, and the federal Department of Education. The summit will focus on preparing for the upcoming flu season.

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